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Politics inflict harm

There has been a lot written recently about alleged problems at Sullivan County Health Care, better known as the county nursing home.

Some of it was in news stories concerning a management decision on staffing and a state report on deficiencies found during a review, but more was from those who work at the facility.

It is impossible for outsiders to fully understand the nature of the disagreements or even whether they are deep-seated or valid. It doesn't take much in the way of strong opinion to create a perception of a wider problem that may in fact not even exist.

As one person pointed out, being a public institution puts Sullivan County Health Care under a brighter light and greater public scrutiny.

Whatever the controversy, it should not detract from Sullivan County Health Care's reputation as a first-rate organization that provides outstanding care to all residents.

Yes, the most recent state report found 11 deficiencies but when one considers the number of residents, around 150, and their daily requirements, the figure is miniscule.

We've heard from both sides — if that is the correct term — on where the fault lies. Some blame the union, some politicians and some Genesis, the private company that took over the nursing home's management in 2005.

The union won a recent ruling before the labor board when the board said management should not have discontinued weekend-only shifts without discussing it with the union.

Forgive us for sounding cynical but it appears an awful lot of politics is at play here and very little that has to do with Sullivan County Health Care's primary function. That is a shame because the nursing home has a dedicated and competent staff that is being hurt by political opportunism.

The contract with Genesis is set to expire June 30. In all likelihood, Genesis will be gone after that. The company turned around a financial nightmare created by the home's previous administrator, while maintaining the level of care everyone expects.

It is not clear what sort of management will be in place after that, though a return to a public administrator seems the most obvious. Whatever course is chosen by those who will make this decision, the residents, staff and taxpayers should demand that the finances and quality of care are of the same high standards we have seen under Genesis, and without the politics.